

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 146989

TOSEC 416

E.O. 11652:

TAGS:JA, PINT, OVIP (KISSINGER)

SUBJECT: JAPANESE UPPER HOUSE ELECTION

1. FOLLOWING IS TENTATIVE INR ASSESSMENT OF VOTING IN
JAPANESE UPPER HOUSE ELECTION (HALF OF HOUSE OF CONCELLORS)
HELD JULY 7.

2. WITH RETURNS STILL NOT COMPLETE, AND WITH A FEW
NATIONAL CONSTITUENCY SEATS STILL UNALLOCATED, THE LDP SEEMS
LIKELY TO HOLD AT LEAST 127 OF THE 252 SEATS. TANAKA WOULD
THUS REMAIN IN CONTROL OF THE LDP AND GOVERNMENT DESPITE A
SHARPLY REDUCED MAJORITY IN THE UPPER HOUSE. THE LDP MAY
SEE ITS PRE-ELECTION MARGIN OF 24 SEATS OVER THE COMBINED
OPPOSITION FORCES WHITTLED DOWN TO AS FEW AS 5 WHEN THE
FINAL COUNT IS COMPLETED TOMORROW.

3. WHILE MOST LDP INCUMBENTS HELD THEIR OWN IN THE POLLING,
THE OPPOSITION PICKED UP MOST OF THE 8 SEATS VACANT BECAUSE
OF DEATH OR RESIGNATION DURING THE PAST THREE YEARS.

JAPAN COMMUNIST PARTY (JCP) WAS THE PRINCIPAL GAINER. ON
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THE BASIS OF THE COUNT SO FAR, IT HAS ALREADY GAINED 5 SEATS

OVER ITS PRE-ELECTION STRENGTH OF 10 AND HAS A CHANCE FOR AN ADDITIONAL 3 AS THE FINAL VOTES ARE COUNTED. JAPAN SOCIALIST PARTY DID SLIGHTLY BETTER THAN EXPECTED, APPARENTLY WINNING 3 MORE SEATS THAN THE 59 IT HAD BEFORE THE ELECTION TO REMAIN UNCHALLENGED AS THE LEADING OPPOSITION PARTY. KOMEITO HELD ITS 24 SEATS, AND THE DEMOCRATIC SOCIALISTS KEPT THEIR LOSSES TO 2 TO REMAIN A VIABLE POLITICAL ENTITY.

4. A SURPRISINGLY HEAVY VOTER TURNOUT OF 73 PERCENT BESPOKE WIDESPREAD DISCONTENT OVER SPIRALLING INFLATION ON ONE HAND AND CONSERVATIVE VOTER ANXIETY ABOUT THE POSSIBLE LOSS OF LDP CONTROL OF THE UPPER HOUSE ON THE OTHER. HIGHER THAN USUAL TURNOUT IN CITIES WAS DETRIMENTAL TO LDP CAUSE.

5. SIZE OF LDP'S EXPECTED MARGIN WILL DEPEND UPON RESULTS IN HANDFUL OF SEATS FROM NATIONAL CONSTITUENCY. IF LDP WINDS UP WITH ABOUT 132 SEATS, IT WOULD ENJOY SOME BREATHING ROOM IN CONTROLLING THE UPPER HOUSE. ALTERNATIVELY, IF IT WINDS UP WITH NO MORE THAN 129, ITS MAJORITY OVER THE NEXT FEW YEARS WOULD BE IMPERILED AS THE CUSTOMARY NUMBER OF MEMBERS' DEATHS WERE FOLLOWED BY CHANCEY BY-ELECTIONS.

6. JAPANESE PRESS IS PORTRAYING RETURNS AS ELECTORAL REBUFF TO TANAKA, NOTWITHSTANDING FACT THAT LDP WON MORE SEATS THIS YEAR THAN IN LAST UPPER HOUSE ELECTION THREE YEARS AGO. LDP PARTY SPOKESMAN EXPRESSED DISMAY WITH RESULT, CALLING FOR REASSESSMENT OF PARTY PROGRAMS.

7. TANAKA'S RIVALS WITHIN LDP SEE THE RESULTS AS BUTTRESSING OWN PARTY POSITION AND ARE THEREFORE GLEEFUL OVER HIS DISCOMFITURE. TANAKA IS IN LITTLE DANGER OF BEING DUMPED IMMEDIATELY, BUT THE CLOSER THE FINAL OUTCOME OF THE ELECTION, THE MORE IMPETUS WILL BE GIVEN TO INTRAPARTY EFFORTS TO PREVENT HIM FROM SUCCEEDING HIMSELF AS PARTY PRESIDENT--AND HENCE AS PRIME MINISTER--IN MID 1975. SISCO

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